



# What happens to waste experiment

## Activity outline

In this simple experiment the class will have the chance to study the different ways that waste materials break down. The class will bury a variety of 'waste' materials and dig them up at regular intervals to see how they are breaking down.

## Instructions:

Ask your class to think about the different types of waste that we make. Think of the things that you throw out everyday. What are they made of? What happens to this waste if it is just thrown onto the ground? Does it stay there forever or does it slowly break down and disappear?



Can you predict what happens to different materials such as paper, cardboard, glass, steel, aluminium, food, clothing and different types of plastic (glad-wrap, plastic bags, milk bottles and water bottles).

Using the Student Worksheet 'What will happen to the waste you buried?' record which waste materials you predict will have a fast or a slow break down rate. In left-hand column table draw the types of waste that you think will break down quickly. In the right-hand column draw the types of waste that you think will break down slowly.

Conduct an experiment to test breakdown rates. Bury materials in a school garden or in a soil box. Dig out the materials weekly and record the results.

- What waste is breaking up fastest?
- Which ones are taking the longest?
- Why do you think some are faster than others?



Using the worksheet 'What happened to the waste you buried?' record what you find about the waste that you have buried. In left-hand column table draw the types of waste that break down quickly. In the right-hand column draw the types of waste that break down slowly.